

REMARKS

Applicants appreciate the consideration of the present application afforded by the Examiner. Claims 1-43 were pending prior to the Office Action. Claims 1, 4, 17, 22, 33, 35, 39, and 43 have been amended; and claims 2, 3, 18-21, 23-32, 34, 38, and 40-42 have been canceled through this Reply. Therefore, claims 1, 4-17, 22, 33, 35-37, 39, and 43 are pending. Claims 1, 17, 22, 33, and 39 are independent.

In the Office Action, the Examiner rejects claims 1-2, 17-19, 22-23, 25-31, 33, and 38-39 under 35 U.S.C. § 102(b) as allegedly anticipated by Gustafson (UPN 6,050,622); and rejects claims 40-41 under § 103(a) as allegedly unpatentable over Gustafson in view of Atherton (UPN 6,888,509). Applicant traverses the rejections in view of the current amendments to the claims.

Favorable reconsideration and allowance of the present application are respectfully requested in view of the following remarks.

Allowable Subject Matter

Applicant appreciates that claims 3-16, 20-21, 24, 34-37, and 42-43 are indicated to define allowable subject matter. To expedite prosecution, the features indicated as patentable by the Examiner have been introduced into the independent claims through this Reply.

More specifically, independent claim 1 has been amended to include the limitations of claim 3; claim 17 has been amended to include the allowable limitations of claim 20; claim 22 has been amended to include the allowable limitations of claims 23 and 24; claim 33 has been amended to include the allowable limitations of claim 34; and claim 39 has been amended to include the allowable limitations of claim 42.

The remaining claims not dependent upon allowable subject matter have been canceled through this Reply. Accordingly, Applicant respectfully submits that the claims are now in condition for allowance.

Applicant notes that the cancellation of claims in this Reply shall not be construed as acquiescence to the grounds of rejection brought forth by the Examiner in the Office Action, and are made merely in the interest of expeditious prosecution. Applicant reserves the right to pursue any canceled limitation in any future continuation application deriving from the instant application.

CONCLUSION

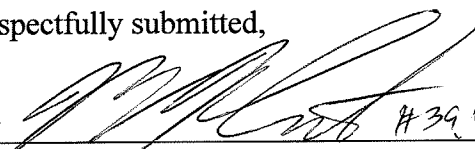
All of the stated grounds of rejection have been properly traversed, accommodated, or rendered moot. Applicants therefore respectfully request that the Examiner reconsider all presently outstanding rejections and that they be withdrawn. In addition to any specific arguments presented herein, all dependent claims are hereby asserted to be in condition for allowance at least based on their dependency from one or more allowable independent claims. It is believed that a full and complete response has been made to the outstanding Office Action, and as such, the present application is in condition for allowance. Notice of same is earnestly solicited.

Should there be any outstanding matters that need to be resolved in the present application, the Examiner is respectfully requested to contact John R. Sanders, Reg. No. 60,166 at the telephone number of the undersigned below to conduct an interview in an effort to expedite prosecution in connection with the present application.

If necessary, the Director is hereby authorized in this, concurrent, and future replies to charge any fees required during the pendency of the above-identified application or credit any overpayment to Deposit Account No. 02-2448.

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Respectfully submitted,

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